

for barb by nancywithagun

Category: Stranger Things (TV 2016)

Genre: Canonical Character Death, Dealing With Loss, Introspection, Loss, Moving On, Other, i always tag stoncy but jancy is main here, letting someone go, stoncy is just always on my mind

Language: English

Characters: Barbara "Barb" Holland, Nancy Wheeler

Relationships: Jonathan Byers/Nancy Wheeler, Jonathan Byers/Steve Harrington/Nancy Wheeler

Status: Completed

Published: 2021-05-12

Updated: 2021-05-12

Packaged: 2022-04-01 00:55:26

Rating: Not Rated

Warnings: Creator Chose Not To Use Archive Warnings, No Archive Warnings Apply

Chapters: 1

Words: 1,485

Publisher: archiveofourown.org

Summary:

Nancy's painting her nails again.

for barb

Author's Note:

just a small little somethin' I've been working on a little on and off.... just wanted to post it because I have a lot of thoughts about the barb/nancy experience and this is what i've got so far..... very unedited and weird tenses, i know.... sorry y'all

Nancy's painting her nails again.

Somewhere in her head, a little voice lets her know that Sandra would really like this color. She knows that this color of pink is Sandra's favorite color, and she wears it at least twice a week if she can. Nancy blows on her tacky-wet nails. She hasn't hung out or talked to Sandra since she started fucking Jimmy Holbeck, but that's just how things go. That's what she used to think, before everything.

Barb would've leaned over and whispered how Sandra's wearing more makeup now because of it, and she would've laughed into her hand like it was funny. Barb was right- she was always right- Sandra really *was* wearing more makeup because of it. Jimmy was dumb as bricks though, and Sandra was-

Nancy blows on her nails even harder.

Steve's favorite color was red (because of course it was), but Nancy wouldn't be caught dead in red nail polish. He's always found it sexy that she doesn't want to wear his favorites just because she's not like other girls, but Nancy's not so sure that's true. Other girls also play hard to get, and Steve is like all the other boys who think it's hot. Barb always thought this sort of behavior was absolutely disgusting, and Nancy thinks she was right. Steve was a distraction, a beautiful boy with nothing behind those big eyes he gazed at her with, and Nancy was needy enough to fall for it. That's what Barb thought, at least. Barb was always right.

However, Barb is dead.

She glances up at the clock above her bed and takes in the horribly late hour. Jonathan is probably asleep right now, curled up all sweet. He's probably snoring and sleep-rumpled, hair matted on one side while the other side pokes up wildly. The image is so clear that it startles her, and she nearly balls her tacky nails into a fist. Once upon a time the image would make her melt into a little puddle on the floor, so flustered and excited that she could hardly stand it. Barb would be there to tease her, smile wide and eyebrows pinched like she couldn't possibly believe her standards were that *low*. Nancy wouldn't say how no boy on earth would be good enough for Barb's approval because they both already knew that. Once upon a time, that's part of what excited her about boys in the first place- what would Barb say?

She supposes that now she'll never know. Jonathan was after Barb, and while some part of her is relieved, there's a larger part that aches over it nearly every day. Her nails are nearly dry now, and all she's thinking about is how the color is all wrong. If she were a better Nancy, the one that Barb would have sleepovers with nearly every weekend, she would have painted them yellow. Yellow wasn't for boys- it was for Barb. There's a joke there somewhere, an echo of Barb's voice saying something like *boys don't like yellow, so you should wear it to keep them from thinking you're like Sandra*. Back when being like Sandra was the worst thing in the world. Back when Steve Harrington was the last boy Barb ever judged her for. Back when any of that mattered.

She breathes out as a gentle summer breeze drifts in her window, strong enough to make her curtains shift but too weak to rustle the collection of pictures she has tacked haphazardly to her vanity. All of them are of her and Barb, and she can hardly stand them, but the idea of touching them just hurts more. The color of her nails is all wrong, but it's not because they're not yellow, or that they're not red, or that they're Sandra's pink. It's because they're not a color that *she* really likes.

When Barb died and the world ended, Nancy stopped caring about nail polish. She stopped caring about nearly everything actually, everything that wasn't Barbara Holland and the fact that she was *dead and never coming back*. She knows that Jonathan knows where

her mind was and where it tends to go without her, because after Barb, there was no one left to keep her realistic. Barb died and took everything Nancy ever cared about with her, and Nancy was left standing on the very edge, waiting for herself to get taken along with. She searched like there was any real chance that Barb was alive out there, ready to be picked up, wiped clean of hellscape goo, and then tucked back in Nancy's bed where she belonged. She tore the world in half with her too-delicate hands to find Barb, and all it got her was a dead body and a boyfriend just as fucked up as her.

Now she's alone, and that's how things are now. She's alone with her own choices, and she chose wrong. This pink won't match with the dress she wants to wear tomorrow, and she can't even go to Barb's to borrow a dress of hers that would match because the Hollands moved away, and Barb's stuff is all gone because Barb is gone. Nancy's calling the shots for the first time. Jonathan was *her* choice, and she wouldn't go back on it. Her heart is always tight and burning nowadays, hurting, and crying and bleeding, but she's to blame. Jonathan loves her, and she loves him. Her flamingo pink nails are going to be cute even when paired with the peony pink off-the-shoulder, and she's going to be alright. Barb is gone now, so speculating on what she has to say is just a waste of time and a knife to her heart.

She takes the time- now that her nails are dry- to pull her dress down and hang it on the back of her chair. The echoes of Barb are everywhere all the time, but Nancy has been through hell. The gun under her bed and the self-defense books shoved to the back of her bookshelf are all things she can't even think of Barb handling well. Violence was never Barb's thing, but neither was being dead, so who's the real shocker here? Barbara Holland is always going to be sixteen to her, stuck in time and stuck in the ways she never got to grow out of. Gross boys, good fantasy novels, funny newspaper comics, and whatever good ABBA record was available at Harry's Audio Mart- those were all opinions of the past.

Nancy was left alive to deal with now.

Now looks like collage applications, Jonathan mailing her newspaper ads for journalism internships near their goal collages, Steve playing D&D in the basement with her brother and some girl named Robin

trying to become her friend. Now looks like her painting her nails because she wants to, because Robin wants to meet for brunch and she's tired of not painting them for Barb's sake. Now looks like doing things for herself and for the new world she's found herself in, the same world where some kids go into different dimensions and some don't come back out.

She knows that she'll never stop thinking about what Barb would've wanted. Barb was always there, always laughing and snorting, opinions so important to Nancy that it hurt. She's old enough now to know that Barb was just as sixteen as she was, and now she'll never stop being sixteen. Steve Harrington turned out to be someone truly worth getting to know. Jonathan Byers means more to her than any other boy could, and every fiber of Nancy's being just knows that Barb would find it all just too fucked up. There's a side of her that wants Barb to be there just so she can stamp her foot like a child and say *look Barb, look! I found this all on my own and it's perfectly fucked up and you aren't here anymore to even try and stop me*. The other, more mature side desperately wants to meet the person Barb might've been. Would she like this new Nancy? Would they unlearn their close-minded judgements together, or would they grow apart?

Nancy doesn't cry over these thoughts anymore, not like before. She curls up in her bed, vanity covered in pictures of a lost best friend, room decorated in gifts from a person frozen in time, knowing that she'll be alright soon enough. Barb is gone, and while the hole it left won't ever fully heal, Nancy knows that she's nearly ready to let her go. She's survived the world ending over and over again, and every time she's gotten back up, even if she didn't want to. Barb never got the chance to live a full life, and while Nancy won't be living for her, she knows that she's done what she could to make sure that Barb died properly.